

Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion

Communication Techniques

Operation R.E.A.D.Y.

Resources for Educating About Deployment and You

Homecoming and Reunion

Communication Techniques

Facilitator's Guidelines

This section provides the facilitator with resources needed to plan and conduct a workshop.

Each workshop unit has **4 sections**:

- **Facilitator's Guidelines**
helps the facilitator make preparations for the workshop
- **Workshop Overview**
highlights the key components
- **Workshop Plan**
provides the facilitator with an outline for conducting the workshop
- **Workshop Resources**
include program activities, supporting videos, flyer, handout materials, and transparency masters

Topic: **Communication Techniques**

Goal: Soldiers and family members can recognize and deal with problems that may arise or persist after the soldier returns.

Audience: This session is designed for **soldiers** and their **spouses** to attend together. It should be taught as soon after reunion as is practical.

Time Required: 2 hours

Room Requirements: This workshop requires a room large enough to accommodate the number of participants. It is designed as a group process for roundtable discussions, with 8–10 people at each table. The room should be arranged for maximum visibility of the flip charts, videos, and overheads.

Facilitator's Preparation:

1. Reserve a location for conducting the workshop that will accommodate the number of participants.
2. Prepare flyers (located in Flyer Master section) and distribute them 1–2 weeks before the workshop
3. Familiarize yourself with the goals of the workshop.

4. The facilitator's job is to lead the workshop, which includes distributing handouts and organizing group flip chart activities. Other tips include:

- ℞ plan an ice breaker
- ℞ encourage participation
- ℞ check for understanding
- ℞ prepare room
- ℞ make workshop personal
- ℞ gather needed material
- ℞ enjoy yourself
- ℞ offer amenities, such as child care, parking, and refreshments

5. Suggested activities are presented in square brackets ([]) in the lesson text.

The lesson text is meant to assist you and is not intended to be read aloud to the participants. The **suggested activities** list the visuals, handouts, or group activities that are used at particular points in the workshop.

6. Prepare overhead transparencies from the Transparency Masters provided:

- #1 Communications Techniques
- #2 Objectives
- #3 Homecoming
- #4 How Do People Communicate?
- #5 Communications Skills
- #6 Feedback

7. Preview the video, *Getting Back Together (710652/TVT 20-1048)*, if you plan to use them in the workshop.

Note: A video is not used for every workshop. Determine if participants have seen it and expand your workshop, if necessary, to show the video.

8. Prepare table tents that have group designations on them and place on tables before workshop begins:

- ℞ Couples with Children
- ℞ Couples without Children
- ℞ Single-Parent Soldiers
- ℞ Single Soldiers

9. Prepare flip charts with the following titles:

Couples with Children

Make 4 columns:

- ☞ Soldiers
- ☞ Spouse
- ☞ Children
- ☞ Myself

Couples without Children

Make 4 columns:

- ☞ Soldiers
- ☞ Spouse
- ☞ Friends and Family
- ☞ Myself

Single-Parent Soldiers

Make 4 columns:

- ☞ Soldiers
- ☞ Children
- ☞ Friends and Family
- ☞ Myself

Single Soldiers

Make 4 columns:

- ☞ Soldiers
- ☞ Friends
- ☞ Family
- ☞ Myself

10. Prepare flip chart (for facilitator use) with the following title:

Communication Roadblocks (single sheet)

11. Reproduce the necessary numbers of handouts from the Handout Masters:

- #1 Homecoming and Reunion Changes
- #2 Reconnecting Personally

12. Assemble all other needed workshop materials and equipment.

Workshop Materials:

Flip chart paper on 1 easel with colored markers
Extra markers for flip chart paper activity at tables
Masking tape for securing charts
Pens and pencils for participants' use

Equipment:

Overhead transparency projector and screen
Television and VCR

Homecoming and Reunion Communication Techniques

Workshop Overview

(time 2 hours)

Estimated Time	Presentation Section	Visual-V Handout-H
5 minutes	Introduction Objectives	V#1 V#2
5 minutes 10 minutes 20 minutes	Homecoming Changes Group activity	V#3 H#1, Question #1 Flip Chart activity Group reports
5 minutes 5 minutes 10 minutes 10 minutes	Renegotiation Intimate Relationships Making the Adjustment Importance of Change	H#2 H#1, Question #2
15 minutes	Break	
10 minutes 5 minutes 5 minutes	Prioritizing Change Meaningful Communication Roadblocks to Communication	H#1, Question #3 V#4 Flip Chart activity Communication Roadblocks (Facilitator)
5 minutes	Communication Skills	V#5
5 minutes 10 minutes	Feedback Thinking It Through	V#6 H#1, Question #4
5 minutes	Conclusion	H#3

Homecoming and Reunion

Communication Techniques

(time 2 hours)

Introduction

[Visual #1: **Homecoming and Reunion Communication Techniques**]

Welcome home!

(make appropriate remarks depending on the deployment)

This Homecoming and Reunion workshop is for **soldiers**, single and married, and **their families**. Its purpose is to assist you with the challenges you may face now that you are back home.

You will join in small groups to facilitate discussion with others who have shared similar experiences and challenges. At this time, please group yourselves according to your personal situation. Tables are designated with the following name tents:

- ☞ Couples With Children
- ☞ Couples Without Children
- ☞ Single-Parent Soldiers
- ☞ Single Soldiers

(allow groups to form)

You will be using activities that may help you meet the challenges you face during your homecoming and reunion readjustment phase.

Objectives

[Visual #2: **Objectives**]

- ☞ To develop an understanding of the challenges of readjustment
- ☞ To develop an awareness of positive interpersonal communication strategies
- ☞ To identify effective communication techniques

Homecoming

[Visual #3: **Homecoming**]

I am going to ask you how your reunion has been so far. You do not have to raise your hands or stand up—just think about your experiences.

Was homecoming everything you thought it would be?

Did it live up to your expectations and fantasies? Did you live up to your expectations and fantasies? Be honest with yourself.

How many of you discussed your homecoming expectations with your family or soldier before your reunion?

(ask for a show of hands)

I know many of you who were deployed had the opportunity to attend homecoming and reunion workshops before you returned. Those who remained at home attended similar workshops.

One point of the workshop was to encourage you to express your expectations before your reunion. By doing so, you could understand each other's anticipations.

After a separation, your expectations of each other may have changed. These new expectations may be stumbling blocks, or they may be opportunities for growth.

Our goal today is to build constructively and positively on changes that may have occurred in your life during your separation.

Changes

*[Distribute Handout #1: **Homecoming and Reunion Changes**]*

You will be working with this handout during the workshop. We will address each of the 4 questions, one at a time, and at the end of the workshop, you will have some tools to help you resolve interpersonal conflicts. You will also have some strategies for better communication.

*[Handout #1: **Homecoming and Reunion Changes** (Question #1)]*

I would like for each of you to take about 10 minutes to complete Question #1 in the handout. Remember, these are your answers and your impressions. There are no right or wrong answers.

(allow 10 minutes to complete)

Group Activity

[Flip Chart Activity (in groups)]

At your tables are flip charts for recording your responses. Ask a volunteer to write some changes you noted in Question #1 on the paper.

After you have finished, we will discuss what your groups have written.

(allow 10 minutes to complete)

[Group Reports]

Let's take a few minutes to look at the list. Let a person from each table tape the paper to the wall. Volunteers can tell us what your group discussed about changes you face.

(allow 2 minutes for each group report)

As you can see, you are facing many changes. Some people think that reunion is more stressful than deployment.

You may have had a fantasy that everything would be perfect when the unit returns. This is not necessarily so.

You will be going through a period of readjustment. You may have already experienced some readjustment stress. Stress is a normal, healthy reaction to change.

You may also have experienced a time known as the "honeymoon period." This is when everything is wonderful shortly after a soldier's return.

Maybe you have **not** experienced a honeymoon period. Problems that occurred before deployment may still be there when you are reunited.

Whether homecoming was a honeymoon, or a thunderstorm, or anything in between, there will come a time when you will need to look at the changes that have taken place in your life. Some of these changes may require renegotiation.

Renegotiation

Renegotiation raises many questions. It relates to the "where do I fit in" syndrome. For the soldier, renegotiation may involve such questions as: Where or how do I fit into my job? Where or how do I fit in with my friends? Where or how do I fit in with my family? Am I still needed? What will our intimate relationship be like? Will my spouse still love me?

For the family, renegotiation may involve such questions as: Do I have to change my way of doing things? Do I have to give up paying the bills? I enjoyed it. Do I have to start cooking huge meals again? What will my relationship be with my spouse? Will my spouse still love me?

Do we need to change any legal arrangements made before deployment, like powers of attorney, wills, guardianships, or bank accounts?

Children may wonder: Do I have to start doing it dad's or mom's way now? Will my curfew change?

These are some issues that you will need to discuss in the renegotiation stage. As you can see by your charts, you have already been thinking about these issues.

Intimate Relationships

*[Distribute Handout #2: **Reestablishing Intimate and Sexual Relations**]*

One issue many of you have already faced concerns your intimate relationship with your spouse. You may have had fantasies that were really wonderful, but those fantasies may not have been realized when you were together again.

It will take time to get over some of the awkwardness of reestablishing intimacy. Intimacy means closeness, trust and communication. After separation, reestablishing intimacy will not happen immediately. Take things slowly and enjoy your reunion.

Making The Adjustment

You have looked at some challenges you face in your relationships due to the changes that occurred during the deployment. Let's talk about ways to make your adjustment easier.

The Importance Of Change

*[Handout #1: **Homecoming and Reunion Changes** (Question #2)]*

Look at the next page in your activity handout. Question #2 asks you to look at some changes you listed in Question #1, and then asks you how important the change was to you, and whether you want to talk about it.

(allow 10 minutes to complete)

Let's take a 15-minute break. When we return, we will continue with this activity.

[Break 15 minutes]

Prioritizing Change

*[Handout #1: **Homecoming and Reunion Changes** (Question #3)]*

Welcome back from the break.

Look at Question #3 on your activity handout. It refers to Question #2. Select several changes you would like to talk about. Answer each of the three areas posed in Question #3.

(allow 10 minutes to complete)

I know you are beginning to wonder where this is all leading. It is leading to better interpersonal communication.

Let's take the rest of the time we have together to explore communication in depth. Then you may complete the activity handout. When you finish, you will have some ideas to help you to communicate more effectively.

Meaningful Communication

[Visual #4: *How People Communicate*]

Meaningful communication sometimes requires great effort. But at reunion time, it is **very important**.

Can you tell me several ways that people communicate?

(take a few responses—answers may include words, actions, body language)

As we communicate with another person, several things take place. We send a message to someone and hope they receive it the way we intend it. If they do—**success**. If not—**trouble**.

The trouble comes when the other person misinterprets what we have said, does not understand the words we have used, or there is much emotion involved in the conversation.

Roadblocks To Communication

[Flip Chart Activity (Facilitator) *Communication Roadblocks*]

If there is a problem in communication, and there are feelings of anger, hurt, or confusion, the process can be difficult, and roadblocks may develop.

These roadblocks may lead to interpersonal conflict. Roadblocks are the way people say things, or the words people use that cause you to stop listening or paying attention to the person who is talking.

What are some roadblocks to communication? You can name these aloud, and I will write your responses on the flip chart paper.

(take a few responses—answers may include tone or loudness of voice, placing blame, negative comments)

So if these are the roadblocks, what could we do to avoid them?

(take a few responses—answers may include listening, feedback)

Communication Skills

[Visual #5: *Communication Skills*]

By improving our communication skills, we can improve the quality of our relationships with others.

As you can see on the overhead, keys to effective communication include tuning in, listening, giving feedback, and responding.

To “tune in” and become a good listener you can:

- Stop talking and try not to interrupt
- Get rid of distractions
- Make eye contact with the other person
- Concentrate on the message they are sending you

Feedback

Feedback reflects the message as you understand it. For example, your spouse:

- Sends a message:
“When will you be deployed again?”
- You receive that message, determine what is meant, and reflect what you heard:
“You are concerned about how long we have together.”
- The sender then responds or clarifies what was actually meant:
“Yes”; or “No. I was wondering about ____.”

By using feedback, misinterpretation and conflict about what was said can be avoided. **But** you cannot listen effectively if you are too tired, you are rushed, or if you are not accepting of the person or the situation.

Often, if one of these conditions exists, you can tell the other person that you know it is important to them, but you are too tired, or whatever. “Could we talk about it later?” is an honest response.

Take a moment to look back at the roadblocks listed on the flip charts, and your answers to Question #3 in the activity handout.

Pinpoint one important change that has happened since your reunion. Think about what we have discussed about communicating.

(allow a few minutes for participants to think this through)

Thinking It Through

*[Handout #1: **Homecoming and Reunion Changes** (Question #4)]*

Using the skills you have learned, take a few minutes to write down some ways you would like to approach the person(s) involved in the change.

Using the space allotted to Question #4 in the activity handout, write what you would like to say to them.

This activity will help you sort out what you want to say ahead of time. When you finally address the individual involved in the change, you can then rationally explain your concerns.

Conclusion

The key to returning home and readjusting is to recognize that changes have occurred. These changes may cause conflicts.

By addressing them in sequence, as you have done here, you can pinpoint which changes are causing you the most concern.

I think you will agree that this is not an easy time. Readjustment requires patience and skill. We have seen how the changes that everyone has gone through affect you and your relationships.

Remember that the way to reunion success is through communication. It is essential not only to communicate how you are feeling, but to listen to what those around you are saying and feeling. Talk openly, but also listen carefully.

[*Handout #3*]

Homecoming and Reunion Communication Techniques

Do you understand the challenges of readjustment?

Do you recognize blocks to communication?

Would you like to learn more effective communication skills?

This workshop will provide you with:

- ✦ take-home information
- ✦ checklists
- ✦ practical ideas
- ✦ opportunity to meet people with common interests

Join us at _____

For a workshop on _____

Date _____

For more information contact _____

See you there!

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Objectives

- ☐ **To develop an understanding of the challenges of readjustment**
- ☐ **To develop an awareness of positive interpersonal communication strategies**
- ☐ **To identify effective communication techniques**

Homecoming

- ☐ **Expectations**
- ☐ **Changes**
- ☐ **Renegotiation**

How Do People Communicate

?

Communication Skills

- ☐ **Tune in**
- ☐ **Listen**
- ☐ **Give feedback**
- ☐ **Respond**

Feedback

- ☐ **Sending messages**
- ☐ **Receiving messages**
- ☐ **Responding**

Homecoming and Reunion Changes

1. Since you or your soldier have returned, what changes have you noticed in your: (answer those that apply to you). List your positive and negative feelings about the changes.

Friends and buddies?

Positive Feelings

Negative Feelings

Spouse?

Positive Feelings

Negative Feelings

Soldier?

Positive Feelings

Negative Feelings

Children?

Positive Feelings

Negative Feelings

Myself?

Positive Feelings

Negative Feelings

2. Looking at your positive and negative feelings, how important are these changes? Place the changes in the spaces below. Then decide how important they are to you.

Change

- ➔ Important to me and I want to talk about it
- ➔ Not important to me and I do not want to talk about it

Change

- ➔ Important to me and I want to talk about it
- ➔ Not important to me and I do not want to talk about it

Change

- ➔ Important to me and I want to talk about it
- ➔ Not important to me and I do not want to talk about it

Change

- ➔ Important to me and I want to talk about it
- ➔ Not important to me and I do not want to talk about it

Change

- ➔ Important to me and I want to talk about it

→ Not important to me and I do not want to talk about it

3. Look at question number 2. Thinking about the changes that are important to you and that you would like to talk about, answer the following questions.

☐ **The change is**

I would like for my (spouse, friends, children) to:

Adjusting to change would be easier if they would:

Adjusting to change would be easier if I would:

☐ **The change is**

I would like for my (spouse, friends, children) to:

Adjusting to change would be easier if they would:

Adjusting to change would be easier if I would:

☐ **The change is**

I would like for my (spouse, friends, children) to:

Adjusting to change would be easier if they would:

Adjusting to change would be easier if I would:

☐ **The change is**

I would like for my (spouse, friends, children) to:

Adjusting to change would be easier if they would:

Adjusting to change would be easier if I would:

☐ **The change is**

I would like for my (spouse, friends, children) to:

Adjusting to change would be easier if they would:

Adjusting to change would be easier if I would:

4. Looking at the preceding questions, answer the following:

I would like to approach _____ about _____.
(person) (change)

I would like to say:

[illegible]

Reestablishing Intimate And Sexual Relations

One adjustment you may face when military separation occurs is reestablishing your intimate and sexual relationship. Most military couples face the question, “How can two people work together toward achieving intimacy when one of them is often absent from the relationship for extended periods?”

Military couples often find that reunion brings out feelings of uneasiness and that their personal relationship is strained. Through an understanding of the effects of separation, you can better cope with the stress that accompanies reunion.

The section below will provide you with information about communication barriers and enhancers. This information can help you to reconnect personally with your partner.

Barriers to intimate communication and sexual relations:

- ✎ Unrealistic fantasies and expectations.
- ✎ Feeling anxiety about intimacy and sexual relations.
- ✎ Feeling that your partner is a stranger.
- ✎ Feelings of anger, hostility, stress, or negative feelings about the separation.
- ✎ Concern about faithfulness to your relationship.
- ✎ Feeling that sexual relations need to be rushed to make up for lost time.

Communication enhancers:

- ✎ Communication will help to bring you closer together. It gives you time to become reacquainted, and helps to let your partner know how you feel.
- ✎ Understand that feelings of anxiety are a very normal part of the reunion process.
- ✎ You have been apart from each other and you both have grown. Take time to get to know each other again.
- ✎ Discuss your negative feelings and frustrations. Fear of losing your partner plays a major role in the development of negative feelings. Listen carefully to what your partner is trying to communicate to you.
- ✎ Don't assume the worst about your partner. If you have concerns about fidelity, talk to your chaplain, or find a counselor that can help you to work through these feelings.
- ✎ Along with communicating, allow yourself time to readjust to being together again. Go slowly, and enjoy your reunion.

Workshop Evaluation*

1. Did you understand the objectives of this workshop? _____ Yes _____ No

2. Do you think these objectives were met? _____ Yes _____ No

3. If you answered **No** to either 1 or 2, please explain your answer below:

4. Circle the word which best describes the effectiveness of this workshop:

Inadequate Marginally Effective Effective Very Effective Outstanding

5. Based on your above response, what are your suggestions for improving this workshop?

6. How did you benefit from this workshop?

7. Did this workshop meet the needs of the participants? _____ Yes _____ No

8. Circle the word which best describes the facilitator's presentation:

Inadequate Marginally Effective Effective Very Effective Outstanding

9. Please share your comments about the facilitator's presentations?

10. If you were the next facilitator to lead this workshop, how would you improve it?

*Use the back of this sheet to continue your responses, if necessary.